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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Fifteenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 302nd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 29 January 1996, at 10.15 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. CORTI

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CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

Third periodic report of Ukraine (CEDAW/C/UKR/3 and Add.1)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Bogatyryova (Ukraine) took a place at the Committee table.

2. Ms. BOGATYRYOVA (Ukraine) said that since the report's submission in 1991, there had been far-reaching changes in the constitutional status of Ukraine and in its socio-economic development. In that year, the people of Ukraine had exercised their right of self-determination, and Ukraine had become an independent democratic State. As of 1 January 1995, the population of Ukraine had been 51.7 million: 46 per cent men and 54 per cent women. Children under the age of 16 constituted 21.9 per cent and the working population 55.7 per cent of the total. According to the 1989 census, of the adult population, 18.8 million women and 16 million men had completed secondary and higher education.

3. For centuries, Ukraine had had a tradition of patriarchy in public affairs and matriarchy in the family; as a result, Ukrainian women had never been as oppressed as women in neighbouring countries, since inequality in one sphere had been fully offset by advantages in others. The current situation of women in Ukraine reflected the process of transition from a totalitarian to a democratic regime and the emergence of new trends in the role of women in society. That was demonstrated, in particular, by the formation of numerous women's non-governmental organizations, the emergence of women business leaders and an overall increase in the public activity of women.

4. National machinery for ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities for women was currently being established. A Committee on Women, Mothers and Children had been established under the President of Ukraine. The Committee's main tasks were to study the social situation of women, to prepare proposals for improving that situation and ensuring State protection of the interests of families and children, to establish a favourable demographic situation in Ukraine and to introduce into Ukraine the best national and world expertise in the legal and social protection of women.

5. In the Supreme Council of Ukraine, there was a Standing Commission on Questions of Health, Mothers and Children and a subcommission on the legal protection of the rights of women, the family and children. The Cabinet of Ministers had a division for women's affairs and protection of the family, mothers and children. In the regions, there were structural subdivisions for women's and family affairs. Within the Ministries of Labour, Health and Social Welfare, there were units or divisions concerned with improving the situation of women, families and children.

6. In the legislation of Ukraine, there was nothing that directly contradicted the Convention; that had been confirmed in parliamentary hearings on Ukraine's

compliance with the provisions of the Convention, held on 12 July 1995. Members of the Government, heads of ministries and departments, representatives of the Council of Europe and representatives of women's organizations had taken part in the hearings. It had been noted that women were underrepresented in managerial positions and in the State administration and that there was a tendency to prefer men to women for managerial positions even if they had the same qualifications. Women were underrepresented in political structures and State executive bodies: there were no women ministers and there were only 17 women in Parliament, corresponding to 4 per cent of the total number of deputies. There were no women in the Presidium of the Supreme Council of Ukraine. Meanwhile, women constituted the majority of staff members in such State executive bodies as the Ministries of Statistics, Finance, Health, Education and Labour.

7. The participants in the parliamentary hearings had recommended that a provision should be introduced into the draft of the new Constitution, concerning equal rights and freedoms for women and men and equal opportunities to exercise them in accordance with international human rights standards. It had also been recommended that, in order to ensure the equitable representation of women and men, the new electoral law should provide for the right of women's public organizations, movements and blocs to put forward candidates for the Supreme Council of Ukraine and other elected bodies.

8. Ukraine afforded women equal rights and opportunities in the areas of education and specialized training, labour, remuneration, promotion and socio-political and cultural activities and also implemented special measures to protect the labour and health of women, enable women to combine work with motherhood, and extend legal protection and material and moral support to mothers and children. It had adopted a number of legal instruments to improve the situation of women, families and children, including the 1992 law on State assistance to families with children, the long-term programme to improve the situation of women, 1992-2000, and the national family planning programme of 1995.

9. By law, mothers were entitled to partially paid leave to care for a child up to the age of three and were able to work part time. Women were entitled to an old-age pension at the age of 55 after at least 20 years' service. Women with five or more children or disabled children were entitled to a pension at the age of 50 after at least 15 years' service. Leave taken to care for children was included in calculating the length of service. Non-employed and disabled women received a social pension at the age of 55.

10. The law on State assistance to families with children provided partial compensation for the pay of mothers who were not engaged in social production because they were caring for a child under the age of three, and monetary payments for families with three or more children. Under labour law, the employment of women in heavy work or work in harmful or dangerous conditions was prohibited; changes were to be made to the legislation on night work by women to bring it into line with the Convention.

11. Although Ukraine had a developed social welfare system, at a time of economic crisis it did not have sufficient State resources to fully finance its social programmes, which consequently were often ineffective. The economic crisis particularly affected working women and young people. Despite her

Government's efforts to improve the situation of the most vulnerable segments of the population, poverty and unemployment were becoming a real threat, especially to women. Of every 10 registered unemployed persons, 7 were women, of whom 4 had children under the age of 16.

12. A State employment programme was drawn up each year and covered questions of employment, job placement and training. Women received specialized training in educational institutions or in the workplace and also in the training centres of the employment services. In regional employment centres, women were selected for training in entrepreneurial activity. Training for girls in occupations associated with modern technology in industry, the service sector and agriculture was being expanded. Special units existed for the job placement of pregnant women on the basis of doctors' recommendations.

13. Inadequate budgetary resources for health care had led to a reduction in guaranteed State medical care for women and children. Although women's health indicators were better than those for men, they had worsened significantly in recent years. According to 1994 data, life expectancy had declined by 1.9 years in urban areas and 1.7 years in rural areas since the beginning of the decade. Since 1990, Ukraine had been undergoing a severe demographic crisis; the death rate had exceeded the birth rate for four consecutive years and there had been an increase in mortality for six years in a row. Mortality rates for men were more than three times higher than those for women between the ages of 20 and 50 and four times higher in the 30 to 34 age group. As a result, the life expectancy of women was 10 years more than that of men. Morbidity rates for men were almost twice as high as for women.

14. Among girls, the rate of gastric and cardiovascular diseases, anaemia, kidney disease and diseases of the reproductive organs had increased. The rate of complications of childbirth had increased from 58 per cent in 1990 to 65 per cent in 1994. Abortion had an adverse effect on the health of women; in 1994, the number of abortions had been 1.5 times the number of births. Since 1990, there had been a slight decline in the number of abortions.

15. The programme extended to the year 2000 and would form the basis for territorial programmes that took into account demographic and religious characteristics and traditions and were based on cooperation between State institutions and public and private organizations. The objectives were to reduce maternal and child mortality, improve health indicators, provide health care for families and women and engage in international cooperation. Since 1993, a network of family planning offices had been built up. As of 1995 there had been 8 regional centres, 12 urban centres and 5 laboratories. Medical and genetic care was also needed to cope with the growing incidence of congenital and other diseases resulting from the Chernobyl disaster and its aftermath. A system of medical genetic centres had been established which provided counselling and prenatal screening for birth defects to 70,000 families each year.

16. In the near future, Ukraine planned to complete the establishment of national machinery to ensure equal rights and opportunities for men and women at all levels of power; develop a single State policy for the overall solution of problems involved in the elimination of discrimination against women; implement a national family planning programme and a national programme for children;

study the experience of European countries and the Council of Europe and draft a bill on the equal rights and social partnership of women and men; and organize a network of establishments to which women and children could go for psychological and medical assistance. The main goal was to develop strategies for promoting the active integration of women in the development process on an equal basis with men.

17. Turning to the Committee's general comments and its questions on specific articles, she said that Ukraine's fourth report had been prepared in accordance with the Committee's guidelines. The draft of the new Constitution was to be considered in April 1996; it included a provision on equal rights and freedoms for women and men and equal opportunities to exercise them in accordance with international human rights standards. Once the Constitution had been adopted, a copy would be sent to the Committee.

18. In the course of the hearings on the implementation of the Convention, there had been an analysis of the de jure and de facto situation of Ukrainian women which had shown that there were substantial differences between legal provisions and their implementation. The Presidium of the Supreme Council had decided to make an in-depth study of the situation in each sector, to take the necessary steps to remedy that situation, and to hold further hearings to monitor the progress made.

19. Recalling that the Committee had requested a summary of the report presented by Ukraine at the Fourth World Conference on Women and had asked for further details of the commitments which Ukraine had made in Beijing, she said that the Ukrainian report to the Conference had described the overall deterioration of the situation of women, the decline in the standard of living, and the worsening demographic situation resulting from economic problems and the impact of the Chernobyl disaster, which continued to consume significant budgetary resources. On the other hand, the Ukrainian Government had established special structures to improve the situation of women. It had ratified a comprehensive long-term State programme to improve the situation of women and to protect mothers and children. It had also adopted a national family planning programme and was continuing to provide all women with free medical treatment. Ukraine had stated its willingness to adopt measures to improve the situation of women and children; despite the financial cost involved, it had effectively embarked on such programmes.

20. Regarding the specific commitments made at Beijing, the principle of equal opportunity at all levels of decision-making had been secured at the national level by the establishment in 1995 of a Committee on Women, Mothers and Children under the authority of the Ukrainian President, and a Standing Commission on Questions of Health, Mothers and Children had been established in the Supreme Council. The Cabinet of Ministers had a division for women's affairs and protection of the family, mothers and children. A network of regional structures dealing directly with women's issues was in the process of being developed, and 11 of Ukraine's 27 regions had already been provided with a regional infrastructure.

21. The national family planning programme had been adopted in 1995. Steps taken to help enable women to have a permanent source of income had included the formulation of a long-term programme establishing employment centres.

Incentives and benefits were provided to enterprises and organizations which hired women with small children by offering them part-time employment and flexible working hours. The employment centres tried to fill vacancies with single women, widows, women with large families, women with disabled children or women who had been previously laid off. They also offered retraining and skills-enhancement programmes. In addition, they were required to fill at least 5 per cent of all vacancies with candidates from "socially vulnerable population groups", although in the current difficult economic climate it had not always proved possible to meet that target.

22. Providing further information on access by women and children to legal measures at low cost, she explained that free legal advice had formerly been available to women in the workplace, but that the situation had changed somewhat owing to the difficult economic circumstances. Such advice was now generally available for a small fee, but it continued to be provided free of charge for certain categories of women. Nevertheless, the Government was trying to broaden the scope of free legal consultations for women.

23. On the question of fundamental discrepancies between the constitutional and de facto rights of women, including economic and employment constraints, inadequate social services, inappropriate policies and outmoded stereotypes, she said that article 22 of the Ukrainian Labour Code prohibited gender-based violations of a woman's right to be hired for work. A special unit affiliated to the Council of Ministers was working in conjunction with other government bodies to ensure that women's social and legal guarantees were respected and that progress would continue to be made in that sphere.

Article 3

24. Commenting on questions raised in relation to article 3, she said that the Ukrainian Government had attempted to offset the burden of work faced by women and its adverse effects on their health by offering incentives and benefits to enterprises and organizations that hired women with small children by offering them part-time work or flexible working hours. Plans were also under way to make shorter working hours for women compulsory, regardless of their age and whether or not they had children.

25. The government department responsible for coordinating policies and programmes related to women was the Women's Committee under the Ukrainian President, which was made up of representatives of women's non-governmental organizations and representatives of the executive branch. The Committee was currently focusing its efforts on formulating a new draft code relating to the family and marriage and on proposing amendments to the long-term programme for improving the situation of women, adopted in 1992. The main element of the long-term programme, which was intended to alleviate factors that discriminated against women at work and in the home, was the women's employment programme, designed to fill job vacancies with female candidates and retrain women who had been laid off during the restructuring of enterprises or organizations.

26. Items which had been submitted to the Supreme Council by the Commission on Women's Affairs and Protection of the Family, Mothers and Children included the provision of social protection for large families, the formulation of a State family planning programme, the ratification of the long-term programme for

improving the situation of women, mothers and children, the formulation of a special employment programme, and the formulation and introduction into school curricula of a sex education programme for children and adolescents.

27. Responding to an inquiry about what actions had been taken to disseminate information on women's rights, she said that there had been increased activity on the part of women's non-governmental organizations, which had held a number of seminars and round-table conferences on a range of issues affecting women in Ukraine. Proposed amendments to legislation affecting the situation of women, and the question of the family code in particular, had been discussed with non-governmental organizations.

Article 4

28. Commenting on questions raised in relation to article 4, she said that the Ukrainian Government had addressed female unemployment by creating the special employment centres mentioned earlier. Those centres selected qualified women candidates and directed them towards careers in economic-related fields. In addition, measures had been taken to educate women through the mass media about their rights in the workplace. Lastly, an inspectorate of the employment service was responsible for ensuring compliance with labour laws. In 1995, a total of 11,000 individuals had been penalized for violating employment laws on grounds of gender.

Article 5

29. In relation to article 5, she said that statistics on the problem of domestic violence were still lacking because the necessary procedures for gathering and processing data had not yet been put in place; she hoped to be able to provide the Committee with detailed figures at a later date.

Article 6

30. Responding to questions about prostitution and sex crimes, she explained that Ukraine's Criminal Code did not outlaw prostitution as such; prostitutes were merely fined. However, criminal charges could be brought for brothel-keeping and for physical abuse of a wife by her husband. Criminal sentences were also mandatory for sex crimes. Any rape was considered a criminal offence, regardless of whether it had been perpetrated by the husband or another party. On the matter of law enforcement measures taken to deal with the international trafficking and sexual exploitation of Ukrainian women, she admitted that the problem was intractable. Women were often lured abroad of their own free will with false promises of employment, and law enforcement agencies could intervene only when they were reported as missing persons, when they committed a crime or when they themselves became victims of crime. Although the problem of international trafficking in women had not formed part of the Government's anti-crime programme for 1993-1995, valuable cooperation with Interpol had uncovered a number of sex crimes involving Ukrainian women in the Netherlands, Turkey and Cyprus. A number of Ukrainian citizens currently faced procurement charges as a result of those operations.

Article 7

31. Commenting on various questions raised in connection with article 7, she said that there were still comparatively few women in Parliament and that practically all of them held senior posts in various parties and public organizations. Nevertheless, the democratic transformations in Ukraine had encouraged broad participation by women in all spheres of public life. Whereas only 11 women's non-governmental organizations had been registered in 1992, by 1996 that number had risen to approximately 70.

Article 8

32. As far as participation by women in the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was concerned, she indicated that 42 per cent of Ministry employees were women. Some 14 per cent of employees in the Ministry's central apparatus were women, and 10 women were currently serving in the Ukrainian diplomatic corps.

Article 9

33. Following the proclamation of independence, Ukraine had enacted a new law which stipulated that women enjoyed equality with men in respect of their own and their children's nationality. The marriage of a Ukrainian citizen to a foreign national or stateless person did not entail a change in the nationality of the Ukrainian citizen, nor did a change in the nationality of one spouse entail a change in that of the other. With the consent of both parents, a child could acquire Ukrainian nationality if either parent did so and could keep that nationality even if one parent renounced it.

Article 10

34. There was no gender-based discrimination in the right to education, and that equality extended to curricula, textbooks, teachers, teaching methods and technical facilities. With regard to the statement in paragraph 77 of the addendum that girls were not allowed to enrol in the translation departments of language schools, she said that the statement referred to the translation departments of military academies, which did not admit girls because their graduates immediately entered the armed services, from which women were excluded. There was no such discrimination in civilian education. With regard to illiteracy rates, she said that 10 years of schooling were mandatory for both sexes.

Article 11

35. Women who worked in the private sector received the same benefits as those in the public sector. During the first half of 1995, women had accounted for 45.2 per cent of workers in industry, 42.1 per cent in agriculture, 17.9 per cent in forestry, 18 per cent in fisheries, 28.8 per cent in transport, 26.7 per cent in construction, 67.1 per cent in communications, 77.7 per cent in trade, 86.1 per cent in food services, 73.3 per cent in information and computer services, 59.4 per cent in the production of consumer goods, 74.7 per cent in education, 50.6 per cent in science and scientific services, 76.6 per cent in finance, credit and insurance and 54.2 per cent in administration.

36. It was illegal to discriminate in offers of employment or in salary against pregnant women, mothers of children under three years of age, or single mothers of children under the age of 14 or disabled children. When a woman in those categories was refused employment, a written justification must be submitted and could be challenged in court. If such a woman was dismissed because the business which employed her ceased to exist, another job must be found for her.

37. With regard to parental rights, she said that men and women had equal rights to the custody of their children. The amount of leave granted for child care depended on a woman's length of service; women who interrupted their careers for long periods of time to stay home with children were also entitled to special consideration.

38. The percentage of the population living below the poverty line was 7.5 for women and 4.0 for men. Women accounted for 62.5 per cent of persons aged 55 or older. Although Ukraine had experienced a negative birth rate over the past four years, there was still a shortage of preschool establishments in certain regions. Over the long term, the State intended to allocate funds for the maintenance of such establishments. There were also informal arrangements among women who provided child care.

39. The problem of job safety affected both men and women. The restrictions on night work applied only to pregnant women and to mothers of disabled children or children under 14 years of age. Other women were permitted to work at night and in jobs that were not classified as hazardous.

40. With regard to gender-related pay disparities, the statistics for the first half of 1995 showed that women earned a higher average wage than men in only 2 of 25 employment sectors. There was equal pay for equal work, but men were able to put in more overtime hours because women were responsible for child care and other domestic tasks. However, there were serious wage distortions; in industry, for example, women's average wages had been 1.5 times those of men in the first half of 1995.

Article 12

41. Ukraine had a system of State prenatal care, which was provided through a network of women's clinics, polyclinics, maternity homes and childbirth centres and whose coverage was almost universal.

42. Ukraine did not produce its own contraceptives and the allocations provided for their purchase did not cover their actual cost. Family planning services were available at no charge and were provided in all regions. However, in rural areas they were often scattered and there might be no public transport available. Sex education programmes in schools, a recent innovation, instructed children at levels appropriate to their age on sexuality and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

Article 13

43. Women and men had equal access to loans and bank credits for business activities.

Article 14

44. Recent legislation had made the problems of rural areas a priority. The Government was attempting to provide rural areas with a better resource base and an improved infrastructure and to reduce outward migration, especially by young women. There were 9 million women living in rural areas, accounting for 54 per cent of the rural population.

Article 16

45. There had been a total of 207,600 divorces during 1994. Men and women had equal rights to the joint marital property in the event of divorce, and each spouse had an equal right to own, use and dispose of such property even if one spouse had worked at home, had looked after the children or for any other valid reason had not worked during the marriage. Property owned by one spouse prior to the marriage, or acquired during the marriage by gift or inheritance, remained the property of that spouse. A disabled spouse who was in need of financial assistance, or who became disabled within one year of a divorce, had a right to continued maintenance from the other spouse, and the courts were responsible for enforcement. An individual who abused, or failed to exercise, his or her parental rights could be deprived of them.

46. The minimum legal age for marriage was 17 for girls and 18 for boys. In special situations, girls as young as 15 might be permitted to marry. In recent years, the marriage rate had decreased and the divorce rate had increased. The basic reasons for the rising divorce rate were the overall situation of political and economic instability, low incomes, difficult living conditions and environmental problems, and inadequate nutrition for children.

47. The CHAIRPERSON noted that, in the years since it had achieved independence, Ukraine had suffered from the current economic crisis and from the problems typically associated with the transition to democracy. Although women always suffered more than men in such situations, it was clear that progress had been made. She praised the legislative changes that had benefited women and welcomed Ukraine's decision to submit to the Committee its new Constitution, currently in draft form, which would offer increased guarantees for women's rights. She was pleased that Ukraine had stressed the importance of the Committee as a human rights treaty body and that it had organized a parliamentary hearing on the Convention in 1995. She felt that there was reason to hope that the work of the Committee, and the provisions of the Convention, would become widely known and would help Ukraine in its progress towards gender equality.

48. The large number of questions asked in response to the report reflected the Committee's concern for the status of women in the Eastern European countries during their transition to democracy and a market economy. Despite the progress made in Ukraine, it appeared that much remained to be done. The Committee was concerned at the statement that women's problems must be temporarily set aside as Ukraine attempted to implement structural adjustment policies. Such policies were affecting women throughout the world, but it was important for legislators to attempt to avoid their adverse consequences. One such consequence was the enormous gender disparity in the area of decision-making, and she suggested that

Ukraine might work with the Council of Europe, which had proposed a number of measures to deal with the problem.

49. She noted that Ukraine was in a state of demographic crisis; the mortality rate for men was three times higher than that for women, while the number of abortions exceeded the number of births. She hoped that measures would be taken to correct that situation. However, she advised caution with regard to the country's many provisions for the protection of mothers and children; such measures were important, but it must be remembered that women were not merely mothers but people in their own right.

50. The Committee had been particularly concerned at the problem of prostitution and violence against women, but she felt that, in view of the impressive progress already made in that area, the country's next periodic report would reflect an improvement in the situation.

51. Ms. BUSTELO GARCIA DEL REAL welcomed the fact that men and women enjoyed an equally high level of education in Ukraine and that Ukrainian legislation reflected the provisions of the Convention in that regard.

52. With respect to article 5, however, she wondered whether the measures taken to protect women in the workplace might not work to their detriment, since, in a market economy, experience suggested that women might simply not be hired if there were restrictions on their employment. In any event, with the advent of new technology, restrictions on heavy work might equally well be applied to men. With regard to article 5 (b), she asked what was being done to promote the sharing of child care by men.

53. She asked why the minimum age for marriage was not the same for men and women, since that contravened the Committee's recommendations. Lastly, at a time of transition, it would be advantageous for women to become more active in political life and decision-making.

54. Ms. KHAN noted that, while there were a number of bodies concerned with women's issues, most of them seemed to concentrate on welfare rather than empowerment. That was a stereotypical approach. The provisions of article 5 of the Convention were important for promoting equality during the transition and for attempting to modify social and cultural patterns. In that regard, there seemed to be a heavy emphasis on motherhood - for example, pension benefits for women with more than five children - while there was no mention of fatherhood in that connection. In Ukraine, stereotypes seemed to be reinforced by elements as diverse as school textbooks and even television programmes.

55. With respect to sexually oriented violence against women, she asked whether statistics on rape were comprehensive and how they were collected. On the question of trafficking in women, even when women chose to engage in prostitution there was generally an economic motive; in many cases, women were lured by organized crime groups offering the prospect of normal employment, only to find themselves entrapped.

56. Ms. BERNARD asked how wife battering and incest were dealt with in the courts, what the attitude of the judiciary was in such cases and whether any measures were being taken in that regard. With respect to article 12, she noted

that there had been an increase in suicide and alcohol-related deaths and wondered whether that could be explained by economic conditions in the country, and whether there were rehabilitation facilities to assist women facing alcohol and drug abuse problems.

57. Ms. MÄKINEN said that she was concerned at the stereotyping suggested by the focus on women as mothers. She would welcome information in the next report on women with disabilities and women victims of violence. There seemed to be a need for more gender disaggregated data. Lastly, she hoped that the next report would give information on women in minority groups, particularly the Crimean Tatars.

58. Ms. SHALEV noted that the legislation adopted to protect women not only represented stereotyping but also was not very effective from a public health standpoint. Men and women must enjoy reproductive freedom without discrimination. In that regard, she noted that the Beijing Platform for Action had called for the development of policies allowing women to take responsibility for their own health. With respect to the labour market, the freedom of the individual to make choices must be the basis of Government policy.

59. The limited availability of contraceptives in rural areas gave cause for concern, as did the rates of abortion and maternal mortality. There was a clear need for improved family planning services. Men's mortality rates were higher than those of women, suggesting that there were health problems in the workplace which should be addressed as such. She asked for information on the incidence of tuberculosis, of which there had been no mention in the report.

60. Ms. JAVATE DE DIOS said that there was a contradiction between the democratization process in Ukraine and the regression in the status of women, whose reduced access to support services and employment opportunities was bad for Ukrainian society as a whole. The stereotyping of women as mothers was odd in a democracy and it appeared that women were being marginalized economically. She trusted that a process of cultural reorientation would soon begin.

61. Prostitution was a serious problem both in Ukraine and abroad and the necessary legislation was lacking. Ukraine might consider seeking international assistance in order to tackle the issue. The impact of environmental disasters on the reproductive health of women had become a concern some 10 years earlier and she asked what measures were being taken to assist in rehabilitation and to avoid new disasters.

62. Ms. ABAKA noted, in connection with article 12, the provision of preferential pensions to women who had given birth to five or more children. In that regard, the maternal mortality rate was increasing and anaemia was a major cause of death, a trend which might well be related to the focus on women as mothers. At the same time, health services were deteriorating under the impact of structural adjustment measures. The Ukrainian view of pregnancy seemed to be that it was tantamount to a disease, although in reality it was a normal function and healthy women should be able to carry on working. Lastly, she noted that, in accordance with the commitments made at Beijing, there was a need for a new family code that would work to the benefit of women's health.

63. The CHAIRPERSON said she trusted that the Committee's comments would help to improve the status of women in Ukraine.

64. Ms. BOGATYRYOVA (Ukraine) said that all the Committee's observations had been noted and would be reflected in the next periodic report.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

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Fifteenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 303rd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 29 January 1996, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. CORTI

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IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 21 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE PRE-SESSION WORKING GROUP

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The meeting was called to order at 4.10 p.m.

IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 21 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Bellamy (Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) took a place at the Committee table.

2. Ms. BELLAMY (Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)), noting that the Fourth World Conference on Women had been a major breakthrough, said that emphasis now should be placed on implementation. In its follow-up activities, UNICEF was going to give priority to girls' education, the health of adolescent girls and women and the promotion of girls' and women's rights. The greatest potential for collaboration between UNICEF and the Committee lay in the area of rights, for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and CEDAW were complementary, and UNICEF was committed to their universal ratification, widespread dissemination and mutually supportive implementation.

3. In recent years, UNICEF had been using the Convention on the Rights of the Child in order to assist Governments and non-governmental organizations to write and revise legislation, promote public awareness, develop decentralized plans of action and implement programmes to strengthen children's rights, and it had acquired experience in that area. UNICEF and the Committee could both benefit from sharing their experiences.

4. UNICEF had worked closely with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Governments and non-governmental organizations on States Parties' reports, and in many cases that process had led to greater mobilization around children's rights. The Committee on the Rights of the Child was using the goals of the 1990 World Summit for Children to measure compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF would continue to facilitate an ongoing dialogue and exchange of experiences between the two Committees, and promote the formulation of national development plans based on gender-disaggregated data, sensitivity to the needs and rights of women and men and equal and effective participation of women and girls in their families, communities, economies and societies.

5. It would also continue to oppose all forms of exploitation and violence against girls and women, female genital mutilation, child labour, child sexual exploitation, rape as an instrument of war, early marriage and childbirth, and to address the special needs of female refugees and female adolescent health and reproductive rights. UNICEF felt it was possible to make an improvement in the lives of girls and women, particularly those in the least developed countries.

6. The CHAIRPERSON said that the Committee's priorities were the same as those of UNICEF, and she wondered whether UNICEF could help raise awareness of the Convention among women throughout the world.

7. Ms. TALLAWY said that she thought assistance in implementing the aims of the Convention should come within the mandate of UNICEF, as any improvement in women's lives would mean an improvement in children's lives. Through its information campaigns, UNICEF could help raise awareness of the Committee and its work.

8. Ms. ESTRADA CASTILLO said that the Convention had had a tremendous impact in the Latin American region and had led to changes in their legislation. Women must be made aware of their rights under the two Conventions and the new legislation.

9. Ms. HARTONO, speaking on behalf of Committee members from the Asian region, said that the goal should be not only to eliminate discrimination, but to build a new society in the context of sustainable development. She proposed regular dialogue, exchange of information and meetings between the Committee, UNICEF and UNESCO; that UNICEF should propose to Governments that they seek closer contacts with members of the Committee, and that the members could be advised to contact UNICEF and UNESCO officials in their respective countries in order to discuss a range of programmes.

10. Ms. BELLAMY (Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that the Executive Board had recently adopted an updated mission statement, and had recommended that women, particularly in their role as mothers, should be included in the UNICEF mandate. Increased educational access for women would contribute to strengthening the family and the community and thereby help resolve many of the problems faced by children. At the same Board meeting, 7 of the 40 country notes discussed had had a framework based upon the Convention on the Rights of the Child and CEDAW.

11. Ms. Bellamy withdrew.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE PRE-SESSION WORKING GROUP (CEDAW/C/1996/CRP.1)

12. Ms. SHALEV, speaking as Chairperson of the Pre-session Working Group, presented the Working Group's report (CEDAW/C/1996/CRP.1), saying that, ideally, the Group should spend one day working on each country, with each expert assigned to a separate country. Members of the Committee should submit their questions to the Pre-session Working Group in good time, in order to allow States parties to reply. Guidelines should perhaps be prepared for the responses of States parties. Committee members should carefully compare the latest reports submitted by States parties with their earlier reports.

13. The report of the Pre-session Working Group was adopted.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.